



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

**Russ Chew's 1-800-FAA-NEWS Phone Message
May 19, 2006**

Let me start this message by congratulating both Tech Ops and Terminal for pulling together to make the cutover to the new control tower at Atlanta International Airport a real success. All of your hard work paid off, paving the way for an extremely smooth cutover. In fact, our Engineering Services managers reported that this cutover was the smoothest of any ever accomplished.

Gary Jackson, Atlanta Tech Ops manager, said that approximately 50 ATO people pulled together in cutting these systems over, and the result was outstanding. Many don't realize how hard the technical challenge is, as the control tower represents an integration of so many of our newest and most complex systems — all which have to come together in one place at the same time. By the Saturday commissioning at 3 a.m., all of the critical systems were working, and workarounds were in place for the others. And fixing those remaining integration bugs were done in the next couple of days.

Terry Ralph, the engineering manager responsible for cutting over to the new tower, reported that this transition would not have gone this well without the teamwork of both management and labor.

We did have a problem with the elevator, which failed to operate at about 4:30 a.m. on that Saturday morning, and was put into manual operation by 9 a.m., so all but two of the first morning shift of controllers had to take the stairs. It turns out that even the elevator is state-of-the-art, and this one is a new model that operates more quietly and smoothly than standard elevators. So the on-site, state-licensed elevator technicians were not as familiar with troubleshooting and correcting the problem. Even so, full operational service was restored by early Sunday afternoon.

This new tower is almost 400 feet high, giving our controllers a clear view of the entire airfield, which is needed to support the upcoming commissioning of a fifth parallel runway. What many don't know is that Atlanta is the hub of so many hundreds of flights each day that one delay there propagates to many, many more throughout the system. So this is really an important event when it comes to the mitigating delay in our system. So again, thanks to everyone for your hard work on this and for bringing it in on time and within budget!

Also last week, about 130 ATO non-bargaining unit employees in the Terminal and Tech Ops service areas received letters reassigning them to the new service areas in Atlanta, Fort Worth and Seattle. Those employees represented by a bargaining unit will receive letters after we complete negotiations with the unions.

Briefing teams have already visited each regional office to answer questions about permanent change of station, other benefits and what happens next. We've posted many answers to most of your questions on our web site.

Now that the time is here, I hope that you will give serious consideration to making the transition to the new service area, as we value your knowledge, experience and professionalism. I realize that these are very difficult decisions for you to make, and for many, this change could mean your deciding to end a long career with the FAA. If that's the case, you have my sincerest hope that you'll find your new future, and that the remaining ATO employees recognize the sacrifices that so many have had to make in making us a leaner and more efficient organization.

But let's not lose sight of the fact that we are getting recognition for the progress and results so far. In a report released on May 4, the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, independently found that the ATO has in fact streamlined management, adopted core values, revised our acquisition processes, and met major acquisition performance goals for the last two years.

The report also highlights the steps the ATO has taken to control costs, and recognizes that we've made significant progress in developing a cost accounting system. Though we still have a long way to go when it comes to cost accounting and reporting, there's no doubt that we are now in a much better position to understand the cost of our products and services, and the factors that make up those costs.

The report also says that to maintain the current ATC system while preparing for the next generation, we will have to work even harder as we have to make the best and most efficient use of increasingly scarce resources. As we have said before, we will be working in challenging budget environment for the foreseeable future as we continue delivering services in the safest air traffic system in the world.

And speaking of safety, I'd like to also congratulate Minneapolis Center as it approaches one million error free operations. This remarkable achievement is a testament to the high quality, professionalism and teamwork of our controllers and supervisors there. I am very proud of their achievement.

Finally, I'd like to mention that this month is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, a time in which we honor and celebrate the millions of Asian and Pacific Americans whose contributions have helped make America what it is today: a strong, free and vibrant society.

This year's DOT Asian Pacific American Employees Council's theme is "Celebrating Decades of Pride, Partnerships and Progress." To me, the "partnership" element is one of the most important. Because our work here in the ATO is so demanding, we rely on each other's talents day after day, regardless of our culture, heritage, language and experience, and we must keep doing so to keep America a leader in aviation.

Well, that's it for this week. Thanks for listening and I'll talk to you again next week.